

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



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29 SEP 1997

The Honorable Newt Gingrich
Speaker of the House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Section 7001 of Title VII of the 1990 Oil Pollution Act (OPA 90) requires the Chairman of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Oil Pollution Research to submit biennial reports on activities carried out under section 7001 in the preceding two fiscal years, and on activities proposed to be carried out in the current two-fiscal year period. This letter, the third biennial report, responds to the congressional requirement by summarizing activities carried out in fiscal years 1995 and 1996, and assessing the Committee's role in fiscal years 1997 and 1998.

Created by Title VII of OPA 90, the thirteen-member Committee was tasked to: (1) prepare a comprehensive, coordinated Federal oil pollution research and development (R&D) plan; and (2) promote cooperation with industry, universities, research institutions, state governments, and other nations through information sharing, coordinated planning, and joint funding of projects. OPA 90 called for the implementation of three programs to accomplish these objectives. These programs are:

A comprehensive program of Federal oil pollution R&D;

A Regional Research Program of competitive grants to universities and other research institutions; and

A series of Port Oil Pollution Minimization Demonstration Projects.

OPA 90 authorizes \$27.25 million to be appropriated annually from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to pay for these programs. However, additional funding to conduct these programs has been limited due to caps on domestic discretionary spending and competing agency program needs.

The Committee met eight times during fiscal years 1995 and 1996. Meeting dates and locations were chosen with an eye towards facilitating contact with State and industry representatives,

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while minimizing agency travel costs. The dates and locations of these meetings were as follows:

October 1994: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency /
Washington, DC

February 1995: International Oil Spill Conference / Long
Beach, CA

April 1995: U.S. Department of Energy / Washington, DC
(Industry presentations were included)

July 1995: Coastal Zone 95 Conference / Tampa, FL

October 1995: OPA 90 Port Oil Pollution Minimization
Demonstration/ Kings Point, NY

January 1996: U.S. Maritime Administration / Washington, DC

May 1996: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration /
Seattle, WA (State presentations were included)

September 1996: U.S. Department of Energy / Washington, DC

All meetings included discussions of general committee business, with the primary issue being the revision of the Committee's Research and Technology (R&T) Plan along the systems analysis approach. The April 1995 and May 1996 meetings were specifically designed to provide state and industry representatives an opportunity to brief committee members on non-Federal research activities and to explore possibilities for leveraging resources.

Significant Committee activities during fiscal years 1995 and 1996 were:

Revising the R&T Plan, forwarded to Congress in April 1997;

Assisting in the preparation and conduct of the Second International Oil Spill R&D Forum (London, 23-26 May, 1995). Over 90 technical papers from 15 countries were presented and a consensus prioritization for future research activities was developed by the delegates. This prioritization was used by the Committee in revising its R&T Plan.

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Selecting the proposals to be funded with the remaining \$413,000 of the Coast Guard's Regional Research Grant money. Seven projects received 1-year grants and looked at the containment and source identification of spilled oils, tanker construction, the recovery of heavy oils and orimulsions from water, and human factors in oil spills. Reports on these projects will be published in late 1997. Research in fast current containment and orimulsion recovery will be continued by Federal agencies.

Coordinating agency participation in two port oil pollution demonstrations - New Orleans (December 1994) and New York (October 1995). Both events involved multiple Federal agencies and consisted of public indoor and outdoor exhibits, static equipment displays, and on-water demonstrations of pollution prevention and response tools.

Exploring potential cooperative efforts with states and industry. Committee members communicate regularly regarding ongoing research with representatives from Texas, Alaska, Louisiana, California, and Washington, as well as the American Petroleum Institute. There is keen interest in conducting cooperative research in dispersants and *in situ* burning, two promising response tools.

Member agencies generally conduct oil spill-related R&D in support of their specific responsibilities, as shown in enclosure (1). However, all members are kept up-to-date on each others' efforts, and collaborate extensively when the opportunity arises (i.e. *in situ* burning of oil, and during the development of decision support tools).

The constraints on funding mentioned earlier are expected to remain for the foreseeable future, thereby limiting R&D efforts in new areas. Using the Committee's R&T Plan as a guide, member agencies anticipate continuing work in their core specialties and exploring opportunities for cooperative R&D efforts with other entities. The R&T Plan assesses current oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response technologies, and identifies program areas where research and development are needed to fulfill the intent of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. For each technology, the Plan provides a general description, followed by discussions on the following: its projected impact on minimizing future oil pollution; its current development status; the technology advance envisioned; required research focus areas; and technical

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references. The R&T Plan is available at the following World Wide Web site in both html and Adobe Acrobat formats:

<http://www.dot.gov/dotinfo/uscg/hq/g-m/nmc/gendoc/coop/coop.htm>

The Committee expects to meet at least biannually during fiscal years 1997 and 1998. These meetings will continue to be held at times and places that maximize contact with non-Federal representatives. The Committee will also continue to:

Serve as a forum for the interagency exchange and dissemination of information regarding oil pollution research needs, ongoing projects, and research findings;

Update the International Oil Pollution R&D Abstract Database maintained by the International Maritime Organization; and

Participate through its member agencies in future International Oil Spill R&D Forums.

An identical letter has been sent to the President of the Senate.

Sincerely,



Joseph J. Angelo
Chairman, Interagency
Coordinating Committee on
Oil Pollution Research

Enclosure: (1) Oil Pollution R&D Focus Areas of Committee Member
Agencies